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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Vineyards. — Christ's Vineyard. — Little Helper. . .	9

CHAPTER II.

Florence's First Years. — How she looked and acted.	
— The Twin Babies.	14

CHAPTER III.

The Soldier's Child. — What Word her Father sent. —	
A Child's Ways of making Money.	18

CHAPTER IV.

Seeking Jesus. — How to seek. — Revival Meetings.	
— The Sabbath School Teacher's Reward.	21

CHAPTER V.

Born again. — New Duties and New Joys. 27

CHAPTER VI.

Beginning to help. — Forgetting Self and remembering
Christ. — A Touching Scene. 29

CHAPTER VII.

Faith and Works. — A Child's Example. 34

CHAPTER VIII.

Progress. — Evidences of a New Birth. — What will
make Disappointments light. — Talking to Father a
Thousand Miles away. 38

CHAPTER IX.

Grape Clusters. — How she gathered them. — Little
Prayer-meetings. — Time for Everything. 44

CHAPTER X.

Perseverance. — How to lay hold of the Rope. — How
to make a poor Hope good. — A Test. 48

CHAPTER XI.

Behavior at Church and Sunday School. 55

CHAPTER XII.

What her Pastor says. — A Sunflower Child. — Four-
o'clock Children. — Idle Leaf Children. 58

CHAPTER XIII.

Florence at Home. — Who comforts little Hearts. —
Ways of gaining Time. — Florence's Plans. — How
she read. — What prayed for. 60

CHAPTER XIV.

Home from the War. — The Soldier's Welcome. —
Florence's Last Birthday. 66

CHAPTER XV.

Beginning of Illness. 70

CHAPTER XVI.

The Consumptive. — Leaving School. — New Lesson
from the Great Teacher. — Trying to be well. —
Getting up Presents. 72

CHAPTER XVII.

Her Last Christmas. — The Tree. 75

CHAPTER XVIII.

Suspense. — Hoping and Praying. — Help in God. —
An Alarm. — Forgiving. — Peacemaking. 80

CHAPTER XIX.

Patience. — Still helping. — A Holiday in Town. —
Last at Church. 85

CHAPTER XX.

Her Love and Gratitude. — Cheerful Temper. —
Thoughtfulness for Others. — "Helping Mother." —
The Struggle for Life. 90

CHAPTER XXI.

Florence's Last Visit, and how her Friends entertained
her. 94

CHAPTER XXII.

"One more Hug." — Failing Hopes. 98

CHAPTER XXIII.

Knowing she must die. — The Snow-storm. — The
Pastor at the Death-bed. — Breaking the News. —
God's Will her Will. — Sunshine within. 101

CHAPTER XXIV.

One Regret. — A Last Message. — Fearless. — "Where
shall you bury me?" — Arranging her own Funeral.
— "A Bud in my Hand, Mother." 107

CHAPTER XXV.

The Last Week. — Faithful unto the End. — Bright
Prospects. — "Sing, and don't cry." — Whose Fault
was it? 112

CHAPTER XXVI.

Florence's Last Sabbath. — Visit from Sunday School
Friends. — Asking to hear her Funeral Hymns. —
"I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me." 117

CHAPTER XXVII.

Death not a Grim Messenger. — Glimpses of Heaven. 120

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- Making her Will. — Some Last Directions. — A Last
Earthly Joy. 123

CHAPTER XXIX.

- The Dark Valley lighted. — Perfect Trust, Resigna-
tion, Peace. — Final Testimony for her Savior. . . 127

CHAPTER XXX.

- Closing Scenes. — Taking Leave of her Parents. —
Falling asleep in Jesus. — The Lone Chamber. —
Flowers, fading and fadeless. 131

CHAPTER XXXI.

- The Funeral. 138

CHAPTER XXXII.

- Tributes of Friendship. — Conclusion. 143

THE LITTLE HELPER.

CHAPTER I.

VINEYARDS.—CHRIST'S VINEYARD.—LITTLE HELPER.

IN the famed Eastern country the happy vintage season has arrived. Along the mountain terraces, from foot to summit, extends a vineyard laden with clusters of grapes. The early traveller by the valley road, drinking in the fragrance borne him on the breeze, lifts his eyes to see the mountain, like an ancient king, arrayed in purple, the half-risen sun a dazzling crown upon his head.

Through gates, and up winding avenues, where countless dewdrop lamps, hanging from the sprays, twinkle and burn out, move lines of laborers in picturesque garb, with baskets

on their heads, going to the harvest of the grapes. Singing they ascend; and, mingling with the treble of the women and sonorous bass of the men, your ear catches the sweet, bird-like music of children's voices.

Yes, bands of children are among the harvesters; not merely taken along by older friends, to be watched and tended until at sunset all shall return down the cool, shadowy walks to their homes. On the contrary, they are to be — some even who are very young — helpers in the vineyard. And all the more happy will they be for being useful.

Rugged in places is the pathway, yet none regard the toil of climbing; all know that the sweetest wine is pressed from grapes which grow on the very mountain-top. So, merrily they go; welcome is the labor, sure of bringing its reward.

Let us see them at their work. The vines are in part trained low upon their trellises — so low the rich clusters depend only a little way from the ground, and quite within the reach of the smallest boy or girl. Boys and girls are best fitted for gathering the low-growing grapes, while the higher are gathered

by men and women; though often a willing, expert child may be seen letting down into the baskets the heavy, fragrant clusters from the topmost branches. As the baskets are filled, men carry them away and empty them into larger baskets, or into the wine-presses.

Dear children, would you not like to live among vineyards, in a land so beautiful, where summer, with soft blue skies and golden sunshine, with opening flower, and ripening fruit, and birds of dazzling plumage, almost completes the circle of the year, and winter is scarcely known? In the season of grape-gathering would you be a delighted helper?

The vintage lasts only a few weeks. But suppose you could have a vineyard here at home, with luscious fruit, ever ripe, and waiting for your hand. Imagine a more excellent person than any you know owning such a vineyard, and seeking grown people and children to work in it, promising the best of wages and constant employment for a lifetime. You would not oblige him to come to you a second time and entreat — would you? — but would say, "I will go," and would begin at once to work — would begin to-day.

Perhaps you understand that now I mean a spiritual vineyard. This is the Lord's vineyard, and He invites you to work in it. O, it is pleasant working for Him. Where He is, it is summer always.

What is it to be Christ's helper? The harvest, He says, is the world. All the unconverted men and women and children in it are waiting to be gathered into His kingdom. Look upon each little boy and girl you meet as a cluster of grapes, which the Great Owner desires should be saved.

You sit among your mates in the Sunday School. How thickly the clusters grow! To gather grapes is to lead these to give their hearts to the Savior. Many children whom you know do not attend Sunday School, and have no one at home to teach them to be good. They are grapes growing upon straggling vines, outside the vineyard walls—rich clusters, which, could they be gathered in, would delight the Master. Will you help?

Remember that even the harvest of this world will end. Your life will end. The Bible teaches that what we do must be done quickly. The harder the toil, the sweeter

the reward. Gather the children — the low-growing grapes — gather them for Christ.

In the hope of teaching and encouraging you by her example, I will tell the story of a child who gave herself to the Savior, and became his LITTLE HELPER, and, having labored on earth a while, was taken up to heaven — there to be a helper still.

CHAPTER II.

*FLORENCE'S FIRST YEARS.—HOW SHE LOOKED AND
ACTED.—THE TWIN BABIES.*

FLORENCE ANNIE CASWELL was born at Natick, Massachusetts, on the 10th of June, 1855. From pious parents she received religious instruction, and commenced at an early age to attend Sunday School.

A happy child naturally, skipping like a lamb in a meadow, and singing like a bird in a tree, Florence was yet very unlike those children who are never quiet or thoughtful. She enjoyed play; she could run almost as swiftly as the wind; and she could leave all, and sit down and listen to what her parents or teachers had to say—so hearing as to remember and be benefited.

Florence was in her fifth year when a twin brother and sister were born. They lived but a few days. When she saw them side by side in that strange little box, instead of in the bed,

— lying so still, — the nurse not taking them on her lap any more to dress, and feed, and show her the tiny pink feet, Florence was full of wonder. It troubled her little heart that the darlings so lately given them should be put away by themselves, as if they were not wanted. Whenever the parlor door was opened, she would glide in, and, climbing in a chair, watch the tiny forms, with their shut eyes and waxen hands, then go away and ask questions about them, and beg they might be carried back to her mother. Her sister said the babies had gone to heaven; but Florence answered, no, they were in the parlor. For she did not know what death was. She was too young to understand about God and heaven, and the human soul, which leaves the body, and, if a converted soul, or that of a sinless babe, goes to Him. These things were to be learned as she became older.

Soon the twins were buried out of sight; and Florence might have forgotten that they had ever lived, but for a picture of them as they lay in their casket, in each other's arms, surrounded by lovely flowers, like two little

ones weary of playing in a garden, and having fallen fast asleep in a bed of bloom.

As Florence grew older, she became the more interesting. Her complexion was fair as a lily, her eyes dark and lustrous, and very large, fringed with long lashes that drooped upon her cheeks. Not the fairness of her face, however, but its modest expression, was its chief attraction. Not her looks, so much as her gentle ways, made her beloved.

Too timid to converse with strangers, or more than raise her eyes to theirs for a moment, to her familiar acquaintances Florence was always most affectionate and confiding. To win her love was not difficult. Her attachments, once formed, were lasting. Absent friends were warmly remembered; and one of her earliest ambitions, which she lived to see fulfilled, was to learn to write, in order that she might send and receive letters.

Florence early began to delight in forming plans for the long, bright future she thought was before her. These she was in the habit of telling to her mother and dear friends; attending closely to all they said in return, in the expectation that they could improve

her plans and aid her to think aright. She liked the society of older people, from whom she could be constantly learning; not unfrequently did a neighbor of her mother receive a visit from the little girl, while just outside the house, perhaps, her mates were occupied with frolic and mirth.

CHAPTER III.

*THE SOLDIER'S CHILD.—WHAT WORD HER FATHER
SENT.—A CHILD'S WAYS OF MAKING MONEY.*

FLORENCE was seven years old, when, the war for the Union having begun, a volunteer company of soldiers was raised in the town, among whom her father enlisted, and, bidding home and dear ones good-by, marched away towards the enemy's country, for a three years' absence.

How much of hardship and fatigue, what peril of life and limb, were surely included in that period! But our soldiers carried brave hearts beneath their jackets of blue; nor less true, though sadder, were the hearts they left behind, to fear and hope, to watch and wait—O, so long!

Florence was now a soldier's child. What deep interest she took in accounts which the newspapers gave of affairs in our army! Especially after a battle, with what trem-

bling eagerness did she look for letters! and when one came, how delightedly listened for news from papa himself! How carefully she attended to every wish he expressed concerning her!

Once he wrote, "Tell the children not to waste any money, and when I come home I will give them each as much more as they may have saved."

Wasn't this a fine opportunity to double their money? Florence thought it was. The proposal set her contriving ways of adding to the five cents and ten cents already laid by. She was naturally industrious; she had never loved idleness; but the motive which was held out made work better than play.

After this, whoever called on her mother was likely to see the spry little fingers employed in manufacturing straw braid, while, perhaps, the smiling lips were heard counting up in whispers the pennies earned in a day, or week. If anybody wanted an errand done, like a member of the Soldiers' Messenger Corps, Florence stood ready. Sometimes, on a bright morning, one of the village ladies would find at her door an active, sweet-

faced child, offering for sale a basket of freshest, nicest spring dandelions. These were the means by which Florence added money to her little treasury.

We may suppose she frequently reckoned her gains, not in the spirit of a miser, but happy in looking forward to the time of showing her father how she had regarded his wish. Of course her Sunday School contribution was never kept back; she did not forget the heathen children, nor those in our own land who are destitute of good books and Sabbath teaching. What she saved were the cents, the twos, and threes, and fives, which some children are in the habit of spending for candy, and useless, hurtful things — wanting the more the more they have — never thinking to how much these small sums amount all together, nor into what trouble their being little spendthrifts may lead them hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

SEEKING JESUS.—HOW TO SEEK.—REVIVAL MEETINGS.—THE SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER'S REWARD.

WE come now to the most important period of the dear child's life — the time when she gave her heart to the Savior and commenced to help in his vineyard. It was during the autumn after her ninth birthday.

Florence regularly heard about Jesus on the Sabbath; but at that time some Christians, who wished to labor more for Him, appointed a series of meetings for week-day evenings. Rev. A. B. Earle came to assist; and old and young were urgently invited first of all to attend to their souls' salvation.

Men of business quitted their farms, and stores, and workshops, and thronged to listen to the message of gospel truth. Young men and women came; children too; and to all were

preached repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is possible to come to the Savior in childhood, or that Savior would not have said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." It is easier to come to Him in childhood. Have you never seen, dear young reader, a wedge driven into a timber? As the wedge sinks deeper and deeper, the two parts of the wood are separated more and more, until they are finally split asunder. Just so the world enters between the soul and God.

The little ones are near to Jesus. They have only to reach towards Him, and He will take their hands in His, and lead them tenderly all their lives. But growing older, forgetful, neglectful of this best Friend, they go farther and farther from Him each year, each day; consequently it becomes more and more difficult to return and find Him.

Do you sometimes wish to come to the Savior, and does something then tell you that you are too young? You are not too young — not a single day too young. If you are able to think and reason thus, you have reached the

very age when you ought to be converted. If you know of ever having done a wrong thing, you need a Savior now. If you would choose to do right rather than wrong, if you want to understand how to be good and to love goodness, you must trust in the Savior, who will give you a new heart.

On the first evenings Florence attended the meetings and listened to instructions from the pulpit, hearing the story of the Cross as though it was something new. The reason was, that never till then had she given it her best, her whole attention. Florence and her mates began to learn more perfectly what is meant by the new birth, and how faith in Jesus saves the soul. She heard that all who put their trust in Him who was crucified for the sins of the world, are saved for heaven; that Jesus loves the little ones, and seeks their love. Never before had she felt how precious it would be to know that this Savior loved her as his young disciple.

Her motives, as well as feelings, were undergoing a change. Hitherto she had meant to be good for her own and her parents' and friends' sake, that they all might be happier; now she desired to be good most of all for the Savior's

sake, that her sins might never wound Him any more.

Perhaps our little friend had been satisfied to do mostly right, but sometimes, when the temptation was very strong, had thought it no great harm to vary a trifle from the best she knew how to do—just for once. Now, conscience was awakened to the reality that God sees and remembers each act and thought; that He approves the right and condemns the wrong, and will reward and punish accordingly. She was sorry for ever having displeased Him, and wanted to learn perfect obedience to His holy commands. She wanted to be able to say, with David, "I hate every false way." A new heart was the "one thing needful" which she could not bear to be without. It made her shudder to think that the heart she had was just such a natural heart as leads people to commit all manner of wickedness, for which a righteous God will send them from His presence forever.

While Florence was feeling herself a sinner in need of a Savior, her Sunday School teacher came to see the family one day. It was the season of a ripening harvest of souls, and Chris-

tians were awake to the duty of working for the Master. The little girl's mother, who day and night was praying for her children's conversion, requested Mrs. G—— to "please say something to Florence, who seemed deeply thoughtful."

A few minutes later, teacher and scholar were in a chamber by themselves, where they bowed in prayer, and the former gave tender, faithful instruction, such as it has often pleased God to bless. Similar instruction had been given in the class, very frequently perhaps; but just now the Holy Spirit was near, without whose influence all human effort to save souls is in vain. The child was sincere and earnest; God gave the teacher faith to believe that His promise, "They that seek Me early shall find Me," was about to be fulfilled in Florence's case. And so it was.

Perhaps the children had supposed, if they were converted at the age of fifteen or twenty, it would be soon enough—as soon as their friends expected. But now, again and again, they were kindly urged to surrender themselves without delay.

It was the Savior's own invitation. The first to accept it was Florence Annie. So

lovely and so loving the Savior looked, she ran into those dear arms gladly. She just thought in her heart, and said with her lips, that she wanted to be, and would be, His. Then He gave her to know she was truly His own.

CHAPTER V.

BORN AGAIN.—NEW DUTIES AND NEW JOYS.

HAPPY Florence ! When God was spoken of, he seemed, not a great King, frowning and awful, but the Father, smiling and gracious, bestowing upon her all good gifts. When she sung of the Happy Land with the other children, she could almost see the bright home that was to be hers by and by, with its angels and the Savior whom they worship and serve. When she prayed, she felt that Savior so near, so attentive to every want she expressed, while the Holy Spirit whispered her what she ought to pray for, that prayer, instead of being a duty only, became a delight.

It was a new experience that she loved to pray and could pray anywhere. Morning and evening devotion was not sufficient ; but often, all the day, whether alone or with others by, her thoughts were turning to God. Ever since she could remember, she had been accustomed

to say her prayers ; but the prayers she had learned did not satisfy her now. Her heart was full of its own new desires, her mouth full of words in which to make known those desires to God.

Her great longing was for the conversion of others, especially her young friends ; and she asked God to give her wisdom to bring some souls to the Lamb who taketh away sins. She studied her Bible as His own blessed word of truth, sincerely desiring to learn His commands and how to obey them.

CHAPTER VI.

BEGINNING TO HELP.—FORGETTING SELF AND REMEMBERING CHRIST.—A TOUCHING SCENE.

FLORENCE not only thought and felt, she also acted. There was no loitering at the gate of the vineyard, making faint pretence of seeking to be useful, and leaving the grapes to be gathered by somebody else, or to drop from the stems and be lost. No, but she set directly to work, like a laborer among the vines of the East, as earnestly, cheerfully.

Florence was never ashamed of the Savior she had found. To all she had something to say for Him, and said it without fear and trembling. With old and young alike she was free to talk of His love. It was this love which wrought so great a change in one by nature bashful and sensitive to the last degree. Religion, that only added to the sweetness and delicacy of her disposition and manner, at the same time gave her courage to be faithful in

every duty. The secret of this was, it made her forget herself. What people would think of her appeared not to be a question in her mind at all. What they thought of her Savior was all her care.

In one of the meetings immediately following her conversion, the shy little thing, known to a few present, always shrinking from observation and answering strangers' questions in low monosyllables with drooping eyelids, stood up before the crowded audience in church, modestly but fearlessly, her sweet face radiant as an angel's, and in clear, joyful tones, and simple, natural speech, told all about her new peace and happiness. Every heart was touched; many an eye was suffused with tears. Others wanted a Savior too.

"I want Christians to pray for me," added the young disciple. And for what should they ask? "I want Christians should pray that I may be useful." This was the request which she wished presented at the throne of grace on her behalf. No mere form, it came from the heart with all the direct sincerity of a new and living thought. Was it not similar to the petition of the wise man, that God would give him, not riches, not

long life, but understanding, that he might be a blessing to others. Every such true desire our heavenly Father answers, — all the same when it arises from the heart of a Sunday School child, as when it fell from the lips of a mighty king.

Another time a considerable number of anxious persons were gathered in the front pews for prayers. Florence was kneeling with them. One or more petitions had been offered, when Mr. Earle said, "Now let this little one pray," — meaning Florence. Immediately she opened her lips in childish fervor of supplication, that God, for His dear Son's sake, would convert and bless these sorrowful, waiting souls. She had the joy of seeing some of them there find the Savior, and that very night begin the new song of praise.

On still another occasion, shortly after, Mr. Earle was standing in front of the pulpit at the close of the regular evening service, while from every quarter of the house, where groups lingered, unwilling to depart, came the sound of weeping penitence and Christian supplication. Florence approached the minister, leading a

young friend by the hand, and looking up in his face with simple earnestness, said, —

“I want Carrie to love the Savior; will you pray for her?”

Mr. Earle replied, —

“Cannot you pray for her, Florence?”

The child bowed her head, —

“Yes.”

Still clasping the hand of her dear playmate, she turned aside into an unoccupied pew, where they both knelt. In the pew adjoining was Deacon E——. The little unconverted girl glanced up at him and smiled, ashamed of what she was doing, and as much as to say, “This is all very silly, to be sure; I wish you to know I am here only to please Florence.” The other showed no consciousness of the presence of any one save her dear Carrie, and that God in whose arms of mercy she longed to place her. In the hearing of the officer of the church, her childish prayer, fresh from the heart, was uttered with as much freedom from all fear and embarrassment as she would have felt in reading some sentences from a school-book, in the class or at home.

The person who witnessed the scene says of

it, "It cannot well be described. I have never seen anything more beautiful or touching." Indeed, what lovelier sight could the world afford? Surely bright spirits on errands of love stayed their celestial flight, looking down to view this non-commissioned angel entering so sweetly upon her brief term of mortal labor.

CHAPTER VII.

FAITH AND WORKS.—A CHILD'S EXAMPLE.

A STRANGER from a neighboring town, superintendent of a Sunday School, having one evening attended the meeting, remained with the anxious and such as were seeking to direct them to the Savior. Observing two little girls sitting alone, the gentleman came and sat down by them. The children were Florence and another of her mates, whom she was earnestly inviting to come to her Savior. Little Mary had hidden her face, and was sobbing hard.

"My dear, do you love the Savior?" the stranger began, speaking to Florence.

"Yes," with a bright smile.

Perhaps the gentleman, surprised at the ready affirmative, doubted whether she had understood his question.

"How long have you loved Him?" he next inquired.

"Two days, sir."

The other was deeply interested.

"If you will tell me how you found the Savior," he said, "I shall like to tell it to my Sunday School. And this little friend of yours, who is weeping so, can you not tell her how you found Him?"

"I try to tell her," the child replied, "but Mamie doesn't see the way yet. Then I pray the Savior Himself to show her the way."

"Will you pray with her now?"

At the stranger's request Florence knelt and prayed that God would convert the dear friend who was kneeling beside her, as sorry and helpless and weary and afraid as a child lost in the woods, who had wandered all day till the dark night was coming on. What she besought for this friend, was just the love of the Savior and sweet peace in Him which she herself enjoyed. When so many were being brought to the Savior there, would it not please Him to bless Mamie too?

This was her prayer. The little penitent felt comforted; but now it was the grown-up man and Christian who was in tears, so full was his heart of wonder and gratitude to Him who can

speak by the mouth of babes. Mary at length saw that all that was necessary to make Flossie's Savior her Savior, was to take Him at His word. And she made up her mind to do just that now, and let nothing hinder her.

The answer Florence gave the stranger, when he inquired if she loved the Savior, was in the exact spirit which marked her entire Christian course, and was the mainspring of her religious activity and helpfulness. It was no guesswork. She had decided once and forever. The truth of God was accepted by her in all its glorious fullness and reality. From the happy day when Jesus washed her sins away, to the midnight hour when He sent His angels to bear her spirit up to heaven, no doubt was ever known to bring a cloud the bigness of a man's hand over her spiritual sky.

Some church-members of ten, twenty, or even forty years' standing, have never gotten beyond a faint hope. When the inquiry is made with regard to their affection for Him who died to redeem them from endless hell, the most that can be inferred from the answer is, that, on the whole, they incline to believe

they do love Jesus. "I hope I am a Christian," they say.

Our little helper rested upon something more substantial than the hope of a hope. Hers was always the hope itself, brighter than sunshine, firmer than the hills. She knew that she loved her father and mother and sisters; might she not just as well know whether or not she loved Jesus? If she was willing and anxious to please her parents and teachers, could she be in ignorance as to whether she would and did obey and please that Savior who has made the keeping of His commandments a test of true discipleship?

CHAPTER VIII.

*PROGRESS.—EVIDENCES OF A NEW BIRTH.--WHAT
WILL MAKE DISAPPOINTMENTS LIGHT.—TALK-
ING TO FATHER A THOUSAND MILES AWAY.*

WHEN an infant is born into life, immediately it has a voice; it stirs its head and body, its hands and feet; and this action and exercise tend to strengthen and develop the feeble frame, till, by and by, the babe has matured into a healthful, intelligent, useful being.

Florence had experienced what the Scriptures term the new birth. So she had a new voice and new energies—or, at least, these were differently employed and directed from what they were formerly. The Psalmist says, "He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." She spoke His praise; she acted His praise. Of course, in her was a visible growth in grace.

The first signs of an infant's development

may be slight, — a starting of the delicate finger-nails, a few more silken hairs upon the little head, — but slight as they are, they catch the eye and delight the heart of the parent. Even so does God see and bless the germs of progress in His babes of the new birth.

Florence went to school every day; and as constantly every evening saw her at the meeting. To go was a thing of course. She loved to be there. So happy a place it seemed, that, however late the exercises were continued, the little girl was always among the last to go away. That slender frame could not fail to become at times very much exhausted. When the closing season of prayer had been protracted, her mother, on going to take Florence by the hand to lead her from the church, sometimes found the child asleep upon her knees. But then she would be wide awake in a moment, with a smile so sweet, and the next evening would seem so full of joyful anticipation of the meeting, that one could not have the heart to hinder her going. Surely, too, her Savior forgave the weakness of the flesh, with so willing a spirit.

Stern autumn was marching on; winds

sounded a shrill bugle-blast up and down the streets, and against window-panes hail rattled like small-shot, while prostrate ranks of summer flowers crept shuddering together for protection from the enemy's fire.

One evening, when the sky was dark and rain-drops were falling, the little meeting-goer, unheeding the weather, commenced her usual preparations. Her mother looked on, silently at first, sorry to disappoint the child, yet reflecting that He who has prepared us a body as a tenement for the soul, makes it our duty to use suitable precaution for keeping it in repair.

Then she said, "Florence, dear, the weather is too unpleasant for us to go out; it would expose you to take cold."

Florence glanced at her mother, then out of the window, without speaking. Drawing a little sigh, her only expression of sorrow, she left the room to return her hat and cloak to their place. When she came again, it was with a face all beaming with cheerfulness; for she had remembered that Jesus is present everywhere with those who love Him, and no place can be lonely where He is.

So pleasantly she yielded her will to that of her mother. Dear little reader, would you do the same? Bear in mind that Florence wanted very much to go; her wishes were just as strong as yours. If you would not have rendered as cheerful obedience, think why not. Florence had a new heart. Do you not need a new heart? The possession of a new heart makes it easy to do right.

Florence took her place by the evening lamp, prepared to contribute her share to the enjoyment of the hours at home. At such a season, how the children missed their father, far away, where chill winds pierced the tent—a tired soldier, lying wrapped in his blanket, perchance dreaming of to-morrow's battle, his partial rest broken by the frequent booming of the enemy's cannon. "O, if he could but come and sit with them just a little while," the children said to one another.

There was his vacant chair, where, had there been no rebellion, he would be sitting to-night, with Jennie leaning upon his knee, his arm about her, reading the evening paper, or assisting the older children in their lessons and giving them pleasant counsel. Florence

well remembered when it was so ; and how, when the hour for retiring came, her parents and sister and self used to bring their Bibles and read the verses by turns ; then, bowing around the family altar, offer up, one after another, their requests, unto our Father in heaven. The little girl thought, if her father were suddenly to open the door and come in, the first thing she would tell him would be about her conversion.

Yet there was one way in which they could talk with the absent one. So papa's last letter was re-read, and an answer prepared in the course of the evening ; Florence, in her turn, taking the pen and filling a page with good tidings concerning the revival, and her own enjoyment of a Saviour's love.

And would not the pious soldier, when, by the light of the camp-fire, he should break the seal of that welcome letter and read those pages, forget everything else, for the time, in joy at his children's conversion ? Was not his sleep sweeter, his heart braver, and his hand stronger, for knowing of the little believer who was asking God's protection for him ; and for the confidence he felt that though he were

called to give up his life for his country, and sleep the sleep of death on the enemy's soil, he should finally meet little Florence in that land where there is neither winter nor war, sorrow nor separation?

CHAPTER IX.

*GRAPE CLUSTERS.—HOW SHE GATHERED THEM.—
LITTLE PRAYER-MEETINGS.—TIME FOR EVERY-
THING.*

ONE day, between the morning and afternoon sessions of school, the lady at whose house the minister was staying, being called to her door by the ringing of the bell, found there a company of little girls, with Florence at their head, who asked to see Mr. Earle. They were shown to his room, little unexpected visitors. Simply at her own suggestion, arising out of the new love she bore her Savior, without the knowledge of even her mother, Florence had gathered these friends to hear about Jesus.

There were Annie and three Marys, and others whose names I do not know, each of whom had a soul to be saved. Florence had loved them in years past, but not half so well as now, since she became anxious to do them good.

The minister invited Florence and her friends

into the chamber, and seated them close around him. There he conversed with the children for some time in a manner to interest them deeply.

"I want you all should be converted," he said to them, "so that God will hear your prayers for me. It helps me to think that Christian children are praying for me. Now, who of you has prayed for me to-day?"

Florence replied — "I have."

Then he said, —

"I may die before any of you, or you may all die before I do — we cannot tell. If I get to heaven first, I will set a light in the window for you; now, which of you can promise, if you go first, to set a light in the window of heaven for me?"

"I promise," Florence answered.

He inquired of her, —

"Florence, can you not tell these dear children, who are seeking the Savior, how you found Him?"

The child turned her large eyes from the minister's face slowly, resting them upon each of the little group, with a look more expressive than any words. All she said was, —

"Why, I offered myself to the Savior, and he accepted me."

After this they all knelt together; the minister prayed, and little Florence prayed. It being now time for school, the children bade good-by and went away.

This was not a solitary instance; but she often came in the same way, bringing her unconverted companions, that they might hear about the Savior, and their need of Him. She kept up a children's prayer-meeting, using every art of persuasion to induce all her mates to attend.

Thus Florence went on helping. She was able to accomplish more than before her conversion, because she was more in earnest. There is, perhaps, no better evidence of a change of heart than this. Her prayer to be useful was receiving daily answers.

At this time she was attending school and occupied with studies rather above the ordinary capacity of one of her age. She was always punctual; there were no tardy marks against her name; and her lessons were learned with a readiness and perfectness which won the constant approbation of her teachers.

Among the relics left behind, precious to a mother's heart, are gifts from her teachers for not having been absent or tardy during the term. She always ran at the sound of the bell, when there was a possibility of being only a minute late.

Whatever she began she finished, and finished thoroughly and well.

CHAPTER X.

*PERSEVERANCE.—HOW TO LAY HOLD OF THE ROPE.
—HOW TO MAKE A POOR HOPE GOOD.—A TEST.*

At length the series of meetings ended. The preacher went to cry, Repent ye, in other places. Revival influences began to be less felt in the community. Then was illustrated the Parable of the Sower. The good seed which had sprung up continued to thrive; but some, because it had not much depth of earth, withered away, and some the fowls of the air devoured.

All men are born sinners; and they remain sinners all their lives, unless converted by the power and grace of God. The Bible tells us that we all are by nature in a horrible pit. If a rope were let down into a pit where men and women and children were perishing, and some of them, instead of clinging to the rope with all their might, as they had been told was necessary in order to be drawn safely out,

should merely take hold of it with one hand, you would not be surprised to see them, after being raised a little way, let go their careless hold and fall back, to sink deeper than before in the miry clay.

The village looked all the same as before ; but it was not the same. The streets ran through and intersected each other without any change ; the Common with its trees, and the public buildings surrounding, were just as they had been laid out and erected ; the dwellings of the rich and poor stood mingling together in the friendly relations of old ; while noisily through the midst, to and fro between the great cities, went the rushing trains as formerly ; and yet Natick was not, it never could be, as before. For the Spirit of God, like a wind, had breathed upon the people ; and every one, old or young, was either better or worse for its influence.

The season had been like a long Sabbath day. Those who had kept it well, returned to week-day employments refreshed and strengthened ; those who had kept it ill, were sick of it, and wished nothing similar might come again. Some scoffers had learned to pray ;

and, alas ! some, through the temptations of Satan, had learned to scoff the more. Many had received the forgiveness of sins ; and many, through rejecting the offers of mercy, had added sin to sin. The Bible bids us call upon the Lord while He is near. Had the blind man neglected to call when Jesus was passing by, he might afterwards have called in vain, and been doomed to grope in a life-long darkness.

There were those who had meant to give the subject more earnest attention, who now viewed the favorable opportunity past, and said within themselves that they could do nothing but wait for another revival. But, dear young reader, do not you reason thus. You would be risking far too much. Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation. Are many coming to the Savior? — come with them. Is no one else seeking? — seek Him alone. Seek Him now — make no delay.

If you are not in the habit of daily secret prayer, commence at once. Try to pray from your heart. Ask the Savior to teach you to pray. Tell Him all that is in your heart. Let it not hinder you if no person appears

deeply interested for your soul. Go directly to Jesus, and He will meet you more than half way—do not doubt it. And do not fear to tell your pious mother or sister, your pastor, teacher, or friend, of your desire to become a Christian. Do this of your own accord, in the strength that God will give you, and you will make your friends glad, and angels in heaven will rejoice; then it will be easy going forward. The promise of God is, He will carry the lambs in His bosom. The youthful heart, like spring soil, is fittest to receive the good seed, and from it to produce a harvest such as God loves.

The meetings closed. The busy angel recorded a last name in the Book of Life, and paused. Whose names were there? Doubtless Florence, like any of those who had failed, might have put away from her mind and heart the wish to become a Christian; for God only invites and entreats,—He compels no one. Jesus, that heavenly Friend, stands and knocks at the door; He does not break down the door and enter with violence, like an officer of the law.

There may have been—I do not know—

among the number who participated in the revival, a few who indulged a hope in Christ, but, through lack of faithfulness to Him in their outward behavior, lost in a measure their inward enjoyment, and after a short time could not tell whether they were Christians or not. They joined with the worldly and thoughtless, as before; then, when in secret they tried to pray, they could not feel that the Lord heard. Having put their light under a bushel out of the sight of others, they were unable to see it themselves, and the confined air soon reduced it to barely a glimmer. Day by day doubts increased; the enemy of souls was exultant, and bad angels in the world below rejoiced over a sinner almost saved and turning again to the error of his ways.

Should this by chance be your case, dear young friend, fly at once to the arms of Jesus, as at the first, and you shall find those loving arms still open to receive you. It is your only wise course. Living or dying, you can never be happy as you are. And if you could go wholly back to your former thoughtless, careless state, you still must know that way to be the way of certain destruction. How much better to turn

in the opposite direction, and so recover your hope, and, by obedience to the commands and example of Christ, secure His loving kindness for time and eternity.

Sometimes a child appears to have been given a new heart; its friends hope this is so; but it had naturally an ill temper or a naughty tongue, and by and by, upon some occasion, it gets angry, or speaks bad words, or tells a lie, just as it used to do before anybody thought it had been converted; and the child and its friends become discouraged about its change of heart.

But if, when you have done wrong, you are truly sorry, and try to do so no more, but to overcome every evil habit, God is ready to forgive and help you. And though your friends may have given you up, and not have seen reason any longer to hope that you were a Christian, yet if now in your heart you feel a little love for the Savior, some desire still to be His child, take courage. Like a soldier left behind on the march, ill and worn out, rouse yourself now that you are able, and hasten and overtake the army of the Lord. Tell your friends you are better and stronger, and are determined for

the future to keep in the front rank, and let them see by your conduct that you are so determined.

Florence, after her conversion, was very conscientious. She never failed of doing right — as the best will now and then fail — but she repented, giving herself no rest till she had confessed sincerely and prayed for forgiveness.

The period following upon the close of a revival is always one to test the genuineness of the convert's faith. We shall see how Florence stood that test.

CHAPTER XI.

BEHAVIOR AT CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.

As will readily be believed, Mrs. G., Florence's Sunday School teacher, was deeply thankful when she could say that the youngest of her class was converted to God. She felt amazed, she said, and knew not how to praise Him for this token of His goodness. This lady, who is the wife of a Baptist minister at present settled over a church in Vermont, in a letter lately addressed to the mother of Florence, makes a record which it could be wished every Sunday School child might as well deserve. She says, "I enjoyed having Florence in my class very much. I was always sure of one attentive listener. After her conversion I think she tried to do a great deal of good among her young companions."

As weeks and months went by, Florence gave increasing evidence of a change of heart. All her duties, but particularly those of a

religious nature, were discharged with a fidelity and conscientiousness worthy of an older Christian. Her piety was consistent—harmonizing one thing with another, like a perfectly working machine. It was all days alike. No argument in favor of gospel regeneration was ever half so convincing to a disbeliever, as for him to have watched the process of a growing spiritual life in this dear child; her simplicity of character rendering that process almost as apparent as the movements of gold-fishes in a crystal vase. All of good there had been in her before was brightened and strengthened; all new traits that appeared were good, and not bad; all the old bad traits were losing their power over her and dying out.

Her attendance at church and Sunday School was regular; and her conduct was always such as to prove how highly she prized her privileges. The superintendent of the school testifies to her punctuality, propriety of behavior, and unwearying interest in the exercises. At the Monthly Concert she was always prepared with a hymn, or some verses of Scripture to recite; and these, like her lessons, were per-

fectly committed to memory. He had no doubts, he says, respecting her change of heart; the evidence she gave was as good as we expect from any person.

Mrs. C., who from her seat in church could not fail to observe much of Florence, says that during the sermon those large, serious eyes were constantly fixed upon the preacher, while her whole attitude was one of deepest attention. The little girl seemed fearful of losing a word.

CHAPTER XII.

*WHAT HER PASTOR SAYS.—A SUNFLOWER CHILD.
—FOUR-O'CLOCK CHILDREN.—IDLE LEAF CHILD-
DREN.*

ONE Sunday a stranger who came to preach was present in Sunday School. Instead of speaking to the whole school at once from the desk, he went from class to class, saying something to each. Coming to Florence's class, he put the important question, —

"Are any of these little girls Christians?"

Beginning with the oldest, at the head of the class, one after another shook her head.

No, none were Christians.

But when it came Florence's turn to answer, she nodded a "yes, sir."

Very glad to have found even one little disciple here, the minister, after some further conversation, said to her, —

"Now if you were asked to give these young friends of yours the best advice possible, what would that be?"

Florence replied, —

“To give their hearts to God and love the Savior.”

The same advice, from her bright home in the sky, she gives to-day to every child not already a Christian.

This minister, who became pastor of the church, alluding to his later impressions of Florence, says, —

“When I spoke to the Sunday School it was never necessary to call her attention to what I was about to say; but as often as I looked at her I saw her steadily looking at me.”

She was like a sunflower, keeping her face towards the light; some Sunday scholars, with their sleepy eyes, rather resemble four-o’clocks at noon; and some are like idle leaves playing with the wind.

CHAPTER XIII.

FLORENCE AT HOME.—WHO COMFORTS LITTLE HEARTS.—WAYS OF GAINING TIME.—FLORENCE'S PLANS.—HOW SHE READ.—WHAT PRAYED FOR.

AT home Florence was sweet-tempered, obedient, helpful. In everything her constant study was for improvement. Each to-day she strove to do better than she did yesterday. If she succeeded, she was well pleased, yet meek, remembering how much she had yet to learn. If she failed, she tried again with patience and hope, not easily yielding to discouragement.

No love of parents and friends can shield a child at all times from childish troubles. Even little hearts may throb sadly, the weak shoulders have their burdens to bear, the tender feet are pricked by some thorns in the path. Not the old and middle-aged only, but likewise the young need to be acquainted with the heavenly Friend who saves out of their distresses all who trust in Him.

A young Christian, while laboring for the Master, has still more time than others. When he meets with disappointment and things go wrong, no time is lost in fretting and crying, in sullenness and perplexity. If ill-treated, he does not have to devise ways of paying off his enemies; but leaving the matter to God, goes on as if nothing had happened. He is content with what he has, not wasting time in wishing and striving for what he cannot obtain. He has no occasion to go in search of pleasures; for in the assurance he feels of his Savior's sympathy and love, he carries about with him always a happiness that nothing can destroy.

Thus Florence acted and felt, and thus found time to do everything when and as it ought to be done. Who that loved the Savior could not afford to be pains-taking for His sake? Who that loved Him could not afford to check the rising of impatience or any wrong emotion, rather than grieve and dishonor Him? Who would not help those who love Him, seeing He calls that helping Him?

Some children lose a great deal of time in

looking for mislaid articles. It was not so with Florence. All that belonged to her, whether clothing, books, toys, had a place, and was put in it. In the middle of the darkest night she could have risen and found directly anything she had the care of. If she was engaged on a piece of sewing, and one of her little mates called to ask her to a walk, Florence first folded her work neatly and put it away. It was not her practice to leave anything undone, intending to do it by and by; she found it best and easiest to do things at the right time.

Many girls of fifteen or eighteen take less care of their clothes than little Florence did. She was ever thoughtful for her mother; to be able to lessen her cares was a source of the greatest comfort. If she was going from home, she did not expect her mother to see that her things were ready, but attended to the matter herself, and made all the preparations it was possible for her to make with her own hands.

One day Florence had the promise of a ride. All children like riding, but Florence at that time rode so seldom as to make the prospect

delightful in proportion to its novelty. Promptly at the hour appointed she was ready, but the carriage did not come till considerably later, and she was obliged to wait. She sat down and waited quietly and pleasantly. No racing to door and windows to see if the carriage was in sight; no useless teasing to know why it didn't come, and when it would come; no exclamations of, O dear! and, It won't ever come. The carriage came in a little while; the child had a fine ride, and was well rewarded for her patient waiting.

At this period Florence was greatly enlarging her plans for the future. The first thing to be done was to obtain an education. This would give her the means of earning money — and money would do so many things. The study of history, or the sight of curiosities brought from foreign lands, awakened in her mind an intense desire for travel, in order to seek and admire the works of the Creator in different parts of the world.

Florence read remarkably well. Her friends often wondered to see her choose books such as not many of her age would be interested in; but she would enter directly into the spirit of

the work, appearing to think and feel as the author thought and felt — so that not only did she understand what she read, but all who heard understood and were pleased to listen.

Her pastor says, Florence was wholly unselfish. But nowhere else was her sympathy so ready, her love so abounding, as in the family. Whatever ill was within her reach, she hastened to remedy. Where her slender ability failed, she carried the case directly to God, so beautifully exhibiting her faith in His tender, watchful care.

Her praying had all the freedom of conversation with a friend. She went to God for every blessing with the same simplicity and confidence that she would have asked of her earthly father the things in his power to bestow. At evening worship it was her custom to mention the little events of the day, thanking God for each separate blessing, and seeking His help in every difficulty. Her special wants and the wants of her friends were freely described. If her mother had seemed more fatigued than usual, little Florence would ask God that her poor mamma might not have to work so hard.

That mother was joyfully looking forward to

what Florence would be in a few more years. So generous was the child's heart, so delicate her tastes, so mature her judgment, that already her mother began to depend on her, and would sit and talk with her by the hour of things relating to present and future, telling her all that was in her own mind.

Only a few months more was Florence to see upon earth ; yet at that time her prospects of long life were as good as those of any one. Alas, for earthly joys ! All are fleeting as a rainbow when the sun goes down.

CHAPTER XIV.

*HOME FROM THE WAR.—THE SOLDIERS' WELCOME.—
FLORENCE'S LAST BIRTHDAY.*

ONE lovely spring morning the school children gathered in their play-ground early, every lip smiling, every eye sparkling like the dew-drops that dotted the grass.

"The war is ended!" cried a little girl in a pink frock, jumping her rope across the lawn and back, only less airily than the swallows above their heads. "The Rebel General Lee has surrendered to our army."

"My father was there," cried Florence, clapping her hands. "And my mother says we may look for him home now in a month."

"I gueth they'll fire gunths on Bothton Common all day long," chimed in the least of little scholars, standing apart, with a bouquet for her teacher, which she was shielding carefully from the sun.

Many there had fathers and brothers and

friends at the seat of war, the prospect of whose speedy return made them half wild with delight.

A column of their schoolfellows were seen advancing across the Common with flags, singing, "When Johnny comes marching home."

Great was the rejoicing throughout the loyal portion of the country. As days went on, our great army was being rapidly disbanded, and the soldiers returning to their homes and happier employments.

FLORENCE'S LAST BIRTHDAY.

A happy, happy day to Florence was that which saw her father returned home indeed. A happy day was it to the soldiers themselves — so war-worn as hardly to be recognized by their friends at first sight.

The closing campaign, the pursuit of Lee's army day after day, with very little time allowed for rest or rations, had proved as much as the strongest could bear; while some poor fellows were carried to the hospital sick or wounded, and unable to join their comrades before the

latter came home, had to be left behind. Some had died bravely on the battle-field; one officer had been sent home in his coffin. Out of a full company of one hundred and one that went from that town, but twenty-four came back with the regiment. Of this remnant, like a tattered banner, some came with impaired health, which warned them that they soon might follow their lamented fellow-soldiers to the grave.

Yet the air rang with shouts of joy. The people of the town gave these veterans a fitting reception. A procession with music and banners met and escorted them into the village; there were speeches on the Common and a grand public dinner. Brave men! they had done the work they went forth to do, and through them and others like them, God had given victory to the Right. So the people welcomed them, crying, Hurrah! hurrah!

This happened on the day that Florence was ten years old; and while enjoying the display to the utmost for the soldiers' sakes, she said playfully that it was partly to celebrate her birthday.

Dear child ! how little did any one think it her last birthday — that when another June with sunlit skies and beautiful flowers came round, there would be a vacant chair in her home, a small grave more in the cemetery.

CHAPTER XV.

BEGINNING OF ILLNESS.

As summer advanced and the corn flung out its dark green leaves, and the tall grain waved in the field, and the apple-boughs bent beneath their weight of fruit, and all nature glowed with the promise of a bountiful harvest, little Florence began to droop.

For weeks so gradual was the change one scarcely perceived it. She avoided much exercise; when her mates engaged in lively outdoor games, she inclined to stand and look on, instead of joining them. She never came running and skipping home from school now; and directly on coming into the house sat down to rest — quite in silence except some one spoke to her, though formerly she had always something to tell.

She wondered why she heard so often the questions — “Are you sick, Flossie? What is the matter?” She had not seen the change,

and did not feel that anything was the matter with her.

From his workshop her father could see the children burst out of the school-house at recess, blithe of limb and merry-voiced, while Florence, one by herself, would walk across the grounds, and turn and walk back; not taking part in their sports day after day.

Then these watchful friends thought her face appeared a shade paler. Her breathing was short, her voice weak; she coughed now and then. They began to be alarmed, and to question more closely, —

"Why don't you play, Flossie? What makes you so still?"

And the child could only answer, —

"I don't know."

"Are you quite well, dear?"

"O, yes," she would reply again, but wearily, "I am well. I don't run and play as I used to, because I don't feel like it; that is all the reason."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONSUMPTIVE.—LEAVING SCHOOL.—NEW LESSON FROM THE GREAT TEACHER.—TRYING TO BE WELL.—GETTING UP PRESENTS.

SLOWLY her strength declined, but Florence loved her books as well as ever, she studied her Bible as regularly, and sought as earnestly to do good. As her cough became worse, disturbing her rest, the little girl would rise in the morning pale and without appetite; still she could not hear of absenting herself from school, even for a day, to miss seeing her teacher's face and lose her place in the class.

Then her mother sent the teacher a note, requesting that Florence, on account of her health, might be excused from hard lessons and allowed to study or not at her own choice. And the teacher was only too glad to obey the suggestion and retain her pupil a little longer, though thinking each day must be the last of her attendance.

Thus the child struggled on as long as struggling could avail. When unable any longer to walk to school, without a tear or murmuring word, she bade her loved teacher good-by till she should become stronger, lingered a little at the familiar desk, gathered up her books and went away home—done with school. After this, however, she often talked hopefully of going again in the spring.

Instead of the school-room the sick-room. None could relieve her of the lesson she had there to learn—how to be weak and weary, suffer pain and waste away, deprived of more and more that she valued, yet preserve a cheerful, uncomplaining spirit. Hard lesson indeed it might seem to one so full of life and hope; but with Jesus for her teacher, it proved just the easiest, sweetest lesson she had ever learned.

Her bed was removed to her mother's chamber, and day and night loving hands waited to supply her every want. So bright and comfortable she seemed much of the time, that strong hopes were entertained of her recovery.

As the holidays approached, Florence was very busy in preparing gifts for her friends, almost forgetting that she was ill. One and

another must have some trifle made by her own fingers. For her "Aunt Ella" a needlebook was stitched. Her father's birthday was to usher in the happy season; and for him she wrought in bright-colored worsteds a picture for framing — the design an urn twined with a wreath and resting on a Bible.

For one week after this task was commenced, Florence was compelled by bad health to lay it by. Becoming better, she resumed it well pleased, wrought diligently and had the pretty gift completed, with a day or two to wait. Its presentation took her father by surprise, which she enjoyed no less than the praise he bestowed on her work when he had taken it from the neatly-folded paper inscribed in her own handwriting, —

"TO FATHER ON HIS BIRTHDAY,

FROM

FLORENCE ANNIE."

CHAPTER XVII.

HER LAST CHRISTMAS. — THE TREE.

HER last Christmas was a joyful occasion to Florence as a member of the Sunday School. No little scholar had more delightedly anticipated the celebration of Christmas Eve at the Vestry, although well aware of being too feeble to attend.

A month earlier it was the dear Thanksgiving Day to which she had looked forward, and which brought her joy, for she remembered how on that returning day they had missed her father, now happily restored to the feast and the fireside.

The invalid's share in the pleasures of Christmas time was to ride over in the afternoon and look at the decorated Vestry, fancying how the children with strong frames and sound lungs were going to enjoy themselves there.

She breathed hard, coughing at slight intervals, as they led her in and seated her amidst

a profusion of evergreen wreaths mingled with flowers. White and wasted looked the small hands when the warm mittens were removed. Very white the face, too, but cheerful in its expression, even to gladness, the lovely eyes shedding sunny glances all around.

A few friends were there, busied with the last of the Scriptural mottoes for the walls ; at seeing the visitor they left their task and gathered about her with tender greetings. This was the farewell meeting between Florence and the teacher, to whose class she had been transferred a few Sundays previous to being compelled by ill health to leave the school.

With admiring eyes Florence gazed on everything ; the Christmas Tree, however, was the greatest of all attractions.

A curious tree indeed is the Christmas Tree, as what child does not know ? and curious fruit it bears. Fruit of so many varieties, growing, ripened and ready to pick in a single day ! There are books, pictures, dolls, baskets of choice things, vases of flowers, clusters of sugar-plums. O ! I could not name the fruitage, good to see or taste, that loads a Christmas Tree.

Unlike other trees, as the apple and pear,

which grow their fruit for anybody who is fortunate enough to own or buy it, the Christmas Tree often marks its products with the names of boys and girls, whose special likings Santa Claus has in some mysterious way found out. A liberal heart, as well as a skilful hand has he, grafting such treasures upon an evergreen tree from the forest.

Doubtless Florence that afternoon would have liked to know which boughs bore fruit for her, but she could wait. Being asked whether she was ready to go, she nodded and smiled. They took her to the carriage and to her home.

The effort had fatigued her, and at early dusk, just while the children were collecting for their evening's entertainment in the Vestry, the sick one at home was helped to undress and go to bed.

There she lay peacefully upon her pillows, thinking of all the happy faces, wondering if they thought of her. No word of regret escaped her, that she could not be among them and have a part in their pleasures. She knew that all was as God, wise and good, had ordered. God's ways suited her, and so her ways suited God; that made her happy.

Hours rolled on, and as the clock was striking nine her ears caught the sound of the opening door, and presently of quick footsteps coming to her room. It was her sisters returned from the festival. Now for her Christmas gifts ! There would certainly be one — perhaps two — possibly even three.

There were more — many more. The next moment they fell over her bed in a shower. Such lovely things ! — could it be that they were all her own ? One by one she took them in her hands to examine, while her sisters stood by repeating, " This too, Floncie — and this, and this."

There was a beautiful portfolio — she would have been more than satisfied with that alone, since it was just the article she had been wishing for a long time. It contained stationery — note paper and envelopes, in places specially assigned them ; besides, there were other compartments — one was for *Unanswered Letters*, one for *Answered*, one marked *Miscellaneous*. This just suited the child's ideas of order in business. Her portfolio was a treasure.

While examining the pretty tokens of remembrance from her many kind friends, the little

invalid was listening to an account of the evening's entertainment, — of how in the light of the lamps the curious fruit had sparkled on the evergreen boughs — of the many who had inquired after her, hoping she would be better soon — and of all that had been said and done to make the hours pass the most pleasantly and quickly possible.

After that she slept, while smiling angels all around seemed wishing her a Merry Christmas.

CHAPTER XVIII.

*SUSPENSE.—HOPING AND PRAYING.—HELP IN GOD.
—AN ALARM.—FORGIVING.—PEACEMAKING.*

WINTER was now at its height of severity, and the tender flower felt its withering influence. A new course of treatment had been prescribed, under which at the first there was a very encouraging improvement; but soon a relapse followed, the patient sinking lower than ever before. Then she partially revived, and again failed; as a leaf that has fallen upon the bosom of the waves, now rises, now sinks, in receding farther and farther from shore.

As yet little had been said to Florence about dying. From conversation to which she daily listened, she was led to believe that the worst to be seriously apprehended was, that she would remain an invalid until spring, when the warm air and sunshine would help to restore her to health.

She had been hopeful as her friends could

wish. By and by it began to be seen that, while pleased with whatever promised her any benefit, she was pondering in her heart the question of whether her heavenly Father did not design to shortly call her away. But her sweet faith never failed. Night after night, in her prayers the invalid would ask God to give her health, that she might know how pleasant it would seem to enjoy the warm spring and play among the flowers with her mates ; but if such was not His will, that He would take her to Himself to walk the golden streets of heaven. These were her words, many, many times repeated.

HELP IN GOD.

It was sweet to see with what entire trust Florence looked to God as her Helper in every time of need. His presence was not less real to her than the presence of father and mother, whom she could see.

Once, when, in the dusk of evening, it was necessary to give her some medicine in haste, the child's mother being herself quite ill, poured it by accident from a bottle containing a preparation which the doctor had left for bathing.

Florence, who never stopped to say, "I can't take it," swallowed the dose quickly, as usual, the moment it was brought.

Harsh and powerful, the draught had no sooner passed her lips than it almost took away her breath. Her mother, discovering the mistake, was greatly alarmed, not knowing what harm might be the result.

As soon as Florence could speak, she looked up in her mother's face, and said, quietly, —

"Let us pray God, mamma, that the stuff may not hurt me."

And God heard the prayer.

On one occasion, seeing a dear young Christian friend indulge in ill humor, Florence seemed very sorrowful, and, as soon as she and her mother were alone, said, earnestly, —

"Mamma, I think —— is not living as she ought; let us pray God to give her more patience."

Was not this making God her refuge, as the Bible teaches?

FORGIVING.

The little girl's mother once said to her, —

"Flossie, I remember that, last Fourth of

July, because you had soiled your dress so badly that I was obliged to take it off, I sent you to bed as a punishment, instead of letting you go to see the fireworks. I am afraid I was out of patience. Darling! mother feels sorry — will you forgive it?"

With the sweetest, most affectionate look, Florence replied, —

"You need not have mentioned it, dearest mother. I didn't think it wrong then; and," she added more earnestly, "I had forgotten all about it this long time."

If it was a wrong, the child had not remembered it long enough to be asked to forgive. Was not that a good example?

PEACEMAKING.

It happened, in the course of her illness, that two gentlemen had a disagreement in her presence, occasioning an exchange of some unpleasant words, which it grieved Florence to hear. Two or three times she interfered gently; but the others gave little heed, and kept up the discussion.

Finally, when she could bear it no longer, the child looked up and said, mildly but firmly, —

"There, let that be the last word."

It made the impression she desired.

"The last word it shall be, Florence," responded one of the friends, in a tone which showed how deeply he regretted having disturbed her so ; and peace was instantly made.

CHAPTER XIX.

*PATIENCE. — STILL HELPING. — A HOLIDAY IN TOWN.
— LAST AT CHURCH.*

FLORENCE was always glad and grateful to be better, and to see her friends encouraged about her. At no time had she been confined to her bed; each morning the little pining frame was dressed, and though her slender, frail limbs looked scarcely able to support an infant's weight, she would walk from room to room, busying herself, resting at intervals on a lounge or in an easy-chair.

Her father as he came from the shop at noon or night, was sure to see the wan face watching for him, and to be greeted with a smile.

His first inquiry commonly was, —

"How have you been this morning, Florence?" or, "Is my little girl better to-night?"

"Better, father," was what she loved to answer, because that made her father happy; and

she said it always in such a glad tone, one might think her almost well again.

If worse, her usual, rather hesitating reply was, —

“I don’t know.”

Florence never complained. Once, when in great distress, she turned an imploring look on her father, and asked, —

“Isn’t there something will make me better, papa?”

It was the most she was ever heard to say regarding her suffering.

STILL HELPING.

Whenever Christians called to see her, Florence wanted to hear about Jesus; when unconverted persons called, she talked to them of Him. At all times a Savior’s love was the sweetest theme she knew. Words can hardly describe the sweet persuasiveness with which she would commend that love to those who were strangers to it.

One day, when such an opportunity had been given her, after her visitors left, Florence remarked, —

“I used to think that to be a missionary one

must go to foreign lands ; but I see now that we can all be missionaries wherever we are — doing good to the people we meet with day by day.”

Weak as she was in body, she had never been more happy to work in the vineyard.

IN THE CITY.

On a bright, clear day, — a day that had been waited for, — when the air was mild for mid-winter, the invalid was taken to Boston for the last time, to see her physician.

An hour's ride by the train transplanted Florence from the retirement of home into the midst of scenes like those of a great holiday. Although so very ill as to excite the pitying interest of all who saw her, the little girl enjoyed the day and the sight of life abroad, contrasting so with that she had lately led.

Fine, prancing horses, attached to gayly-painted sleighs, sped along Washington Street to the music of bells, and many a rosy, happy young face, peeping out from warm worsteds and furs, grew sad for a moment at meeting the poor pale cheeks and beautiful bright eyes of the stranger

child. Goods in rich colors, splendidly bound books, with every variety of toy and fancy articles, filled the shop windows, inviting purchasers from among the moving throng of old and young along the sidewalks.

Florence rested on a sofa awhile, then ate a wee bit of dinner, hardly enough for a pigeon, saying how nice it was, and how kind everybody seemed, and towards evening returned home, the happier for her trip to the city.

LAST DAY AT CHURCH.

One fine Sabbath, when illness had prevented Florence from attending church for some time, her father, finding she wished very much to go, drew her there on a little sled over the crisp and glittering snow.

How good to meet again her many friends in that dear place ; to sit in the pew with her parents and sisters ; to see her pastor's face and hear his voice from the pulpit once more ! But it was no new thing for her to listen as if knowing it was for the last time.

When the service was over — the last she attended — a friend took her home in his sleigh.

She rode the short distance leaning on a kind arm for support. Weak and exhausted as she was, from the head of the steps, as they carried her into the house, she looked back to those in the sleigh with a bright smile of pleasure and gratitude, a "Thank you," and "Good-by."

CHAPTER XX.

*HER LOVE AND GRATITUDE.—CHEERFUL TEMPER.
— THOUGHTFULNESS FOR OTHERS. — “HELPING
MOTHER.” — THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.*

HER love and gratitude to the many from whom she received little kindnesses during her illness, knew no bounds. Indeed, her affection for her friends, always warm, seemed to increase as the time of separation drew nearer. It was sometimes feared lest seeing so much company should prove an injury to the little sick girl; at the same time it seemed impossible to deny her what was so precious as these visits of friends.

One day Mrs. E—— received a message that Florence wished to see her. When the lady came and sat down by her couch, Florence said to her, “I wanted to thank you for the nice preserves you sent me. I thank you very much.”

As her voice failed, making conversation

more and more difficult, the child had often to content herself, when friends called, with saying merely a few words, her looks expressing the rest. She would fix her large, loving, joyful eyes upon them, viewing them from head to foot, appearing to feast on their presence.

HER CHEERFUL TEMPER,

as in the days of health, did not depend on the gratification of her desires, but was equally manifest under disappointment.

Her appetite being poor, all her friends were anxious to provide her delicacies. One morning Mr. W—— called to say he was going into town, and to ask Florence what nice thing he could bring her. She named something, and when towards evening it was brought her, received it with gladness.

Another time she was less fortunate. She had been trying to think of something that would relish, and at last said, —

“O, I know what I would like — a banana. Shan’t I have a banana, mamma?”

“I am afraid we cannot get you any,” her mother replied; “bananas are out of season, dear.”

Florence smiled, and said not a word more about the banana.

HER THOUGHTFULNESS FOR OTHERS

continued, however severe was her own suffering. When racked with coughing, and daily getting weaker, Florence begged her father to buy a piece of cotton cloth, that she might be helping her mother to make it up.

"Do get it, papa," she said; "indeed, I can sew long seams."

When, to please the child, it was bought, she at once had a sheet prepared, and with fingers so emaciated they resembled a bird's claws, "helped mother" with the sewing, finishing a hem.

A person, who was much with Florence as her little strength wasted, remarked that inhalation, which had been prescribed for her lungs, cost her a painful effort; but she gladly persevered in the use of the remedy as long as her friends had any hope of its success. She wanted to get well for the sake of her friends, because it would make them happy.

As the prospect of the child's recovery darkened, another physician, residing at some dis-

tance, was summoned. On account of his own ill health, and of severe illness in his family, it was doubtful whether he would be able to attend the little patient. He came, and Florence was pleased and grateful. When tea was being prepared, she called her mother and said to her, —

“Give the doctor my china cup and saucer to drink his tea from.”

When they came to the supper-table, the doctor observed the grand, showy cup beside his plate, and, making inquiry, learned that this was the way in which the little girl had sought to show her gratitude to him for his coming.

CHAPTER XXI.

*FLORENCE'S LAST VISIT, AND HOW HER FRIENDS
ENTERTAINED HER.*

FLORENCE'S last visit was made to her grandmother in Medfield. One evening the family received news of the death of a relative, and an invitation to his funeral next day.

With the first arrangements made for attending, Florence came in with a plea to be taken as far as her grandmother's, there to remain till the others should return. Fears were expressed that she was not well enough to ride a distance of eighteen miles ; but she thought herself quite able, and consent was given. Then Florence, the same as when in health, went to see after the clothes she would want to wear, placing all in readiness for morning, as they must set off early.

The next day proved a beautiful one ; and Florence, all snugly wrapped, was happy to find herself in the sleigh, that glided swiftly over the

white and polished road. But the sun had not risen high ere the warmth of his beams began to dissolve the snow into streams of water, rendering travelling less pleasant than they had anticipated.

"You are not enjoying your ride, my dear," her father said to Florence, thinking he saw a look of distress on the patient little face.

"O, yes, father," the child replied with a smile; but presently the look of distress came back, and would not be driven away.

It was not till they arrived at her grandmother's, that Florence confessed to having suffered on the way.

"When we came to worn places in the road, where the sleigh touched the bare ground, it hurt me so here!" she said, laying her hand on her chest.

"O, why did you not tell us?" her parents inquired; "and we would have left you at some good friend's house on the way."

Then they knew that she had suffered in silence rather than give trouble or make them grieve on her account. It was like Florence.

After a short rest the dear child felt as well as on previous days. It was thought unsafe,

however, for her to return that night, and the visit was extended to three days. Her mother was always near her, ministering to her few wants as only a mother can. Other friends, old and new, clustered around, happy only in making her happy. It was here Florence and her parents had once lived awhile; and here still resided her first Sunday School teacher, Mrs. C——, to whom she was tenderly attached.

A gentleman of Boston, who was an inmate of the family, and a fine musician, took pleasure in entertaining the child with the piano and guitar; but while receiving all these attentions gratefully, she sat much in silence, with a far-off look in her dark eyes, and seeming to listen more to the music of heaven than of earth.

Meanwhile the gentle sufferer's appearance attracted even dumb creatures. The gentleman's dog, a noble animal, would steal to her side, and lay his head on her lap, waiting for the thin hand's caress, and looking up in the pale face with eyes almost humanly tender and pitiful.

After a Sunday at her grandmother's, Florence was conveyed home in an easy carriage,

with pillows to rest upon, and everything provided for the comfort of the journey. The sleighing had quite disappeared. She reached home bright and glad, charmed and apparently benefited by her visit.

CHAPTER XXII.

"ONE MORE HUG."—FAILING HOPES.

ON Wednesday morning, when her father had left the chamber, Florence crept from her own little bed and nestled on her mother's pillow.

There she rested, silent, satisfied, and happy. The tardy winter daylight entered in at the windows frescoed by the frost in fragments of landscapes and many a lovely and picturesque shape. By and by her mother observed, —

"I must rise, Flossie — it is late ; in a little while I will come and dress you."

"Not yet, mother — not yet," pleaded the loving voice ; "one more hug."

Her mother complied, and the child, creeping closer, lay like a brooded fledgeling beneath its mother's wing.

In this unutterable tenderness, this clinging of the tendrils of natural affection around their

dearest object, was a warning that Florence would not long be here; that the child felt herself gliding out of that fond embrace into the cold arms of Death. The mother had never been so impressed to what extent the frail body had perished. The feeble pulses and fluttering breath were tokens which suddenly took away the strength, leaving the heart almost too faint to say, "Thy will, O God, be done."

The clock in the next room was heard striking the hour. The mother roused herself and repeated, —

"There, darling, mother must — mother must go now."

"Well, a minute — only a minute longer — *one more hug.*"

NO HOPE.

Early in the afternoon Florence remembered that it was the day for the Sewing Circle, and expressed a strong desire to attend.

"O, mother, they are to meet at Mrs. ——'s; I want to go."

"Mother doesn't feel well enough," was the reply; and, as ever, Florence submitted quietly.

She thought they could have a little sewing

circle at home, and she would commence a new kind of patchwork. Some pieces were brought and cut in rose pattern. But she had not been long occupied with it, when she began to feel very ill. Then she put her work into its box, and the box into its place, — to be taken out no more by her fingers, whose next employment would be with a golden harp in heaven.

When her father, who had been sent for, came in haste, he thought his little daughter dying. After some time she revived from the fainting fit, but continued very weak, scarcely able to speak. That night they took off the scarlet-plaided frock for the last time. Soon little Florence would wear angel robes.

When the light of another morning fell on those wan and sunken cheeks, the last hope of her being spared to them faded from the parents' hearts. They said to each other that their darling had but a short time to live, and that it would be wrong to conceal from her the truth. Then they wept together, asking themselves, "How can we tell her? How will she bear it?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

*KNOWING SHE MUST DIE.—THE SNOW-STORM.—
THE PASTOR AT THE DEATH-BED.—BREAKING
THE NEWS.—GOD'S WILL, HER WILL.—SUNSHINE
WITHIN.*

IN an hour like this, it is to the kind-hearted, sympathizing pastor the mourner looks for help the best that earth can afford.

A snow-storm was raging without when the father of little Florence, with sad countenance, entered the minister's study to request that he would come and break the great news to the dying child.

Through gathering drifts along the streets, and against beating north winds laden with blinding snow, the pastor shortly after made his way towards the home of Florence. Not more dreary was the day than his heart, as he imagined the scene that was before him. He loved that lamb of the Good Shepherd. Her life had been so beautiful, so full of promise,

that its sudden closing would need to be counted among the hidden things of God's all-wise providence. He, too, questioned with himself, how would the child bear to be told that she must die. He considered how gently to break the intelligence to her; but before having fixed upon any plan, found himself at the door.

A few minutes afterward he entered the sick room. Florence welcomed her pastor with a smile and kiss. She was in bed, supported by pillows, her difficult breathing not permitting her to lie down; and indeed she did look much more ill than her pastor had yet seen her.

When the parents had withdrawn from the room, and they two were alone, the pastor, seated by the sick-bed, conversed with Florence, gradually approaching the dreaded subject.

"You know," he said, "that everybody must die. The old die, the young die; all people die at some time."

The little girl inclined her head thoughtfully, and he went on:—

"How would you feel, Florence, if you knew you were to die soon?"

She was silent for a moment ; her pastor saw that she understood his meaning. But there was no sign of alarm or other emotion. Calmly she replied to the question, —

“I should be sorry to leave father and mother, and Belle and Jennie.”

There was a short pause. What a multitude of thoughts rushed into the mind of the child, with the knowledge that she was probably on the verge of the grave ! O, there was so much to be left behind. Besides her parents and sisters, there were the Sunday School, teachers, and friends. True, the thought had come to her mind before, that perhaps she should never again be with them ; but to think it might be, and to know it must be, were so different ! Her late visit to her grandmother was before her like a picture ; the dear faces of uncles, aunts, and cousins seemed clustering about her bed, their mournful voices to beg her not to go away from them forever. The last weary weeks and months had been cheered by the hope, either that she would be better soon, or that the crisis was past and she was really improving. How few the days since the new physician had pronounced that there was “an even chance” for her recov-

ery ! Nor was the expectation of being able, as she grew up, to do good and help more in the vineyard of her blessed Lord, the least thing which would have to be given up.

These were some of the reflections suddenly awakened in her heart. Then her dear pastor spoke again : —

“ If it was God’s will to call you away, you would be willing to go — would you not, Florence ? ”

This time the answer was ready.

“ Yes,” she said distinctly, meekly inclining her young head.

Her will had been swallowed up in God’s will forever when she gave her heart to Him. Their wills had been one all along the months. God and herself could not have two wills anywhere. God’s choice was the best, and her only choice now.

Her pastor then, relieved of all fear of consequences, told Florence plainly that it was believed she could not live beyond a few days, or perhaps a week or two. She heard him with perfect composure, and in a moment, as it were, all her feelings changed. To have seen her, you would have felt sure that she had

just heard some very delightful news. No bright-plumed songsters of the wood ever gathered themselves together so quickly, warned by the frowning skies and chilling blasts of autumn, and departed for a land of soft airs and vernal sunshine, as the hopes that young spirit had cherished, checked in their earthly course, took wing flockwise from these false and shadowy scenes, toward the realm of unfading loveliness. Her face became illuminated with joy.

"I've lots of friends in heaven," she exclaimed with animation. "Some little cousins are there whom I never saw. How happy we shall be when we meet!"

Upon her pastor's reminding her that another, a divine Friend, would be there likewise, Florence responded, —

"O, yes, my Savior is there, I know; I shall see my Savior," as if she had intended to tell her pastor only that of which he was not before aware, while the presence of her Savior was something well understood.

It was safe now to help her to search her heart, to see on what her hopes for eternity reposed.

"What makes you so sure that you will go to heaven?" her pastor inquired.

"I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me," was the sweetly assured reply.

Was not hers a good hope indeed?

CHAPTER XXIV.

*ONE REGRET.—A LAST MESSAGE.—FEARLESS.—
“WHERE SHALL YOU BURY ME?”—ARRANGING
HER OWN FUNERAL.—“A BUD IN MY HAND,
MOTHER.”*

ONE regret, in the course of that interview with her pastor, was expressed by the dying little Christian. She had been referring with evident pleasure to the time of her conversion—speaking of just how long ago it was: then from that she seemed to come along, by the path she had trodden, toward the present time.

“I wish I had been baptized,” she said, a shadow for a moment resting on her face at the thought of a duty left undone, a privilege never now to be enjoyed. Then, as if unwilling to waste any precious moments in useless regrets, she added, “But it is no matter now.”

A LAST MESSAGE,

as her pastor was about to take leave, Florence gave him to his little son Ernest.

"Tell Ernie to be a good boy and meet me in heaven."

What a change of feeling had been hers within the hour! Then her desire had been for the society of friends on earth; now it was for the society of heaven. Indeed, from that hour, as one of her friends observed, "Florence seemed to live in two worlds." While her body lay on its bed of languishing, her spirit seemed already to have soared above and entered within the pearly gates of the Paradise of God, to see and know the glory and reality of the place.

Never had that pastor spent a more heavenly hour than the one in the sick-room he had entered with such sorrowful feelings. Well might he bless Jesus for what he had there witnessed of the power of religion to meet every necessity in life and death. Without the winter storm howled fearfully; within were brightness, and peace, and joy, such as no summer day on earth could picture. How great the contrast?

FEARLESS.

When her mother reëntered the sick-room, Florence turned her calm eyes full upon her, and said, —

“Mr. King tells me I have only a few days to live, mamma.”

The mother’s heart was full, but she restrained her grief; to have disturbed by its indulgence such holy serenity would have seemed sinful. Presently the child asked, —

“Where shall you bury me, mother? Shall you carry me to Medfield, and lay me by the side of the twins?”

“No, my darling,” her mother answered, “we shall bury you in the cemetery here, and bring your little brother and sister and lay them beside you.”

From this beginning Florence proceeded at once to arrange all her earthly concerns — taking up one after another readily as if from a list before her; deciding on all points promptly, and, her decision made, never referring to the same thing afterward to propose any alteration regarding it.

The same afternoon of being told that she

must die, Florence expressed her wish to have her funeral in church, the Sunday School occupying the floor pews, according to the custom at the Monthly Concert. The singing should be by the Sunday School; she selected the hymns. She selected her text, —

"This is it, mother: 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' That is my text; the pastor will preach from it at my funeral."

Her mother inquired, —

"Do you mean the beginning of the Twenty-third Psalm, which reads, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters'?"

"Yes," she said, "those are the words."

A little while after she asked, —

"What will my dress be, mother?"

"Leave that to mother — won't you, dear?" she was asked.

"Yes, mamma; let it be what you like best. Put a bud in my hand. I shall have flowers — shan't I, mother?"

Her mother reminded her that, it being mid-winter, flowers were very scarce, adding, it might be difficult to obtain them.

Florence immediately recollected that a gentleman residing in a neighboring town, and owning a conservatory, had once—long before—offered to give them flowers, and she said, —

“Mr. G—— will let papa have some for me, I think.”

CHAPTER XXV.

*THE LAST WEEK. — FAITHFUL UNTO THE END. —
BRIGHT PROSPECTS. — "SING, AND DON'T CRY,"
— WHOSE FAULT WAS IT?*

THE last week, passed in much suffering, was yet the most diligent one of Florence's whole life. Her energy, equalled only by her patience, was a wonder to all. Helplessly weak, and with shortening breath that seemed merely to flutter about her lips, obliging her to pause in uttering even short sentences, she yet went steadily on in the execution of last things, until knowing of nothing that remained unattended to.

She was very desirous of bidding a personal farewell to as many of her friends as possible, especially her young friends. Some of these were constantly coming to see her; many who refrained, fearing their coming would do her harm, received a summons to the bedside of the dying girl. All were most affectionately

exhorted to trust in the Savior and meet her in heaven.

As may well be imagined, these farewell scenes were peculiarly tender and affecting. Friends wept around the dying bed; often the child's mother was obliged to leave the room to relieve her feelings; but no tear on these occasions dimmed the eyes of Florence, no sob choked her utterance. Her face was like the face of an angel; her voice, though feeble, full of heavenly music.

For friends at a distance, whom she could not see, Florence left some special message of love. This, for two dear cousins, was a specimen of many:—

“Tell Frank and Emma to love the Savior and go to Sunday School, and to *tease* their father to love Jesus too; then they will meet me in heaven, and will have a star in their crown.”

To be good, then to do good, and finally to receive the great reward;—did not this short message comprise the duty and chief end of man? Is not this the Bible order of goodness?

At Florence's request, one day a young friend was sent for, to whom, at her coming, the dying girl said, —

"I have sent for you that I might ask you to come to my funeral and sing — you have such a good voice. Come, and sing loud, and don't cry."

ONCE AGAIN

Florence spoke regretfully about not having been baptized. She said, —

"I wish, mother, I had been baptized last summer, when sister Belle was, — and I should if they had asked me."

Yes, Florence, darling; that is true. You did joyfully every duty; joyfully you would have rendered obedience in this also. It was not your fault. Tell the Savior so, as he folds you to his bosom. Tell Him the fault was ours; we confess it, and are sorry. Bow down and clasp those blessed feet that were nailed to the Cross for your salvation and ours, praying Him that He will ask the Father to give His people faith — living faith — in the conversion of children.

When the Savior hears and answers your petition, as He will, angel Florence, there will be no more neglecting to feed his lambs, as He bids ; no more leaving them out of the fold ; no more of a fearfulness which exposes them to the very dangers we dread ; no more withholding the little ones because they are little. There will be no more trying to have the children good without a change of heart. All will know that, young or old, none can be good with the goodness which Christ taught, except they are converted.

As He speaks tenderly of "little ones that believe in Him," with joy and praise should such be received into His church. We know not whether among Lydia's and the Jailer's baptized households there was not some little believer, as young, or younger, than you, dear child. You believed with all your heart ; had Philip been here, he would have said, "Thou mayest" — be baptized.

As you lately said, "It is no matter now." Only we would that for our own sakes, and far more for the honor of our Lord, we could recall the opportunity that might have been afforded

you of following your dear Savior down into the water and being buried in the liquid grave with Him. To Florence it is "no matter now." Glorified with Jesus, she is bathing in the eternal sunlight of his love.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FLORENCE'S LAST SABBATH.—VISIT FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL FRIENDS.—ASKING TO HEAR HER FUNERAL HYMNS.—“I LOVE JESUS, AND JESUS LOVES ME.”

HER last Sabbath, the day Florence loved so well, had come. Ere another she would enter upon her endless Sabbath in heaven.

Florence had expressed a wish once more to hear some Sunday School singing. Accordingly, at the close of that day's session of school, which immediately followed the morning service in church, Mrs. P——, a dear teacher, having invited a number of children to accompany her, went to sing for her former pupil, now so soon to join the angel choir. The sick girl understood for what purpose these friends had come, and gave them a most affectionate welcome.

The teacher presently inquired, —

“What do you wish us to sing, my dear? Will you choose something?”

"The hymns that are going to be sung at my funeral," Florence replied.

A request so singular and unexpected quite overcame her friends. The children wept, the teacher wept; and as they could find voice amid sobs and tears, the hymns were sung. Florence listened not only with calmness, but delight, appearing to enjoy the exercise very much indeed; her lips smiling the while, her eyes beaming bright and clear almost as we may imagine them to-day in heaven.

When they ceased, she thanked them sweetly, adding, —

"You have made me very happy."

Composing herself as well as she was able, Mrs. P—— had some conversation with the child, feeling it to be the last on earth. And if there was sadness in the prospect of separation, there was likewise joy in witnessing with what entire trust and confidence that Christian child awaited the change so near at hand. The question once put by her pastor was here repeated, —

"Why do you feel certain of getting to heaven?"

Her answer was the same as on the former occasion, — no better could be given, —

“Because I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me.”

Her teacher then asked, —

“Would you not prefer to get well if you could?”

This seemed a more difficult question to answer. Could she forget the joy her friends would feel if she were well again, or the good she formerly planned, and might yet in that case accomplish? But so far from having a desire to choose for herself, the path God had marked out for her looked brightest and loveliest. She said, with a little hesitation, —

“If I could be well immediately, why, I don’t know but I might be willing.”

That was not unlike St. Paul, when he said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” How happy is the Christian’s lot under any circumstances !

CHAPTER XXVII.

*DEATH NOT A GRIM MESSENGER.—GLIMPSES OF
HEAVEN.*

A GRIM messenger, to others' view, Death might appear ; but not so to her who had learned to look with such sweet faith beyond. It was as though a father should send a messenger to the heart of the enemy's country to bring his beloved child to a secure and happy home, and this messenger should go in the garb of a savage, with war-paint on his face, and a wolf-skin over his shoulders, and arrows at his side ; and as though, when the child saw him coming, she recognized him instantly, through his disguise, for the trusty friend whom her father had proposed to send for her. Her heavenly Father had told her in His Word, that Death would conduct her to His blissful presence in the house of many mansions ; she believed, and therefore felt no fear.

Heaven, as the dwelling-place of her Savior

and the angels, was to her a reality, a perfect certainty. No possibility that she might not find it all she had been led to expect, no doubt of her welcome there, no fear lest on arriving she should feel herself a stranger, no question of whether friends would know each other there, ever came in to disturb for one moment her exalted peace.

Two or three days before her death, the child's mother said to her, —

"I wish, dear, when you are called to step down into the waters, I could take your hand and cross over the river of death with you."

"I wish you could," was the reply.

But she never thought of the journey as lonely or long — never thought of a time, ever so brief, between the earthly adieu and the heavenly welcome — a space, a moment even, in which she should be a prisoner in the narrow coffin, or lie in unconscious sleep in the gloom of the grave.

"I shall see Frankie P——, mother," she said.

Frankie was a lad of the village, who, a few months before, had accidentally shot himself, and, after having suffered the amputation of a

limb, died in sweet peace, confiding in a Savior's love.

The day before her death Florence asked for the picture of the twins; and taking it in her almost transparent hand, and gazing with unspeakable joy on the likenesses of her baby brother and sister in heaven, she exclaimed, —

“O, aren't they pretty? I shall soon see them. I shall soon see them.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

*MAKING HER WILL.—SOME LAST DIRECTIONS.—A
LAST EARTHLY JOY.*

FROM time to time little tokens of remembrance had been given by Florence to her mates at their final leave-taking. But now she was going to make her will. It was on Tuesday afternoon that all that remained of things she had loved to call her own were brought, and her mother sat down beside her dying bed to listen while she made her bequests.

"Mother, one thing I prized I shall never see again. But you may. I mean my little flower garden. Winter will soon be over. Spring will come. My pinks will grow up and blossom sweetly. I can think just how they will look. Mother, my flower garden I give to you."

Her mother said, —

"Some of the choicest plants shall be set upon your grave, my child. You know how care-

fully we will tend them, covering them from the winter frosts ; and there, in summers yet to come, they will bud and bloom as you have seen them in their garden beds."

Florence listened with a cheerful light in her eyes, and proceeded, — holding in her trembling fingers a delicate bit of embroidery on velvet, her own handiwork, representing a harp, guitar, and an open music-book, —

"This too, mother, for the pin-cushion — this is yours.

"My handsome flowered and gilded cup and saucer are my father's, to remember me by.

"To sister Belle I give my portfolio, my Christmas present. *The Youth's Companion*, the subscription to which she gave me, I give back to her. Ever since I could read I have liked it, it instructed me in so many things. Only the New Year's number has borne my name on the cover.

"To sister Jennie I give my sled. My four dollars in the purse divide between my sisters. Some day one or the other may lose her purse ; then she shall have mine.

"These three little books papa sent me from the war, give grandma."

To this her father suggested an amendment.

"No," responded the little legatee, with perfectly clear views concerning what she was doing; "because grandmother had three sons in the army, she will like books about soldiers."

Thus the child disposed of her little possessions, till nothing of all this world contains belonged to her.

But O, how rich her heavenly treasure!

SOME LAST DIRECTIONS

Florence left with her mother to be attended to after her death.

"Write Mr. Earle — will you, mother?

"Write my Sunday School teacher, Mrs. G——, and send her my picture. Tell her" — here, as often, she was obliged to pause for breath — "tell her I'm dead — tell her to say to her little Sarah, I want she should meet me in heaven.

"My first teacher, Mrs. C——, invite to my funeral. There is one pink envelope in the portfolio that was mine — put the letter to her in that. Fold a sheet of paper, mother, and put in the envelope. Let me see it. The

sheet is too small — try the other size. Yes, that just fits the envelope — that is right.

"When you write cousins Mary Jennie, and Ella Florence, and Mary Ida, and the boys, to ask them to my funeral, mother, tell them, as I tell all — to meet me in heaven."

ALMOST HER LAST JOY,

connected with earth, was to be told by her mother that her young sister was inquiring how she could give her heart to the Savior. Her mother said, —

"I think you have had a good influence over Jennie, which will last when you are gone. You are doing me good, too."

Florence turned her lovely eyes on her mother with a glad smile, and whispered, —

"It makes me so happy."

CHAPTER XXIX.

*THE DARK VALLEY LIGHTED. — PERFECT TRUST,
RESIGNATION, PEACE. — FINAL TESTIMONY FOR
HER SAVIOR.*

NEAR the dark valley, Florence was still praising God.

To her mother she said, —

"I used sometimes to wish I was rich; now all I wish is to be just as Jesus would have me; and I know that is the only way to be happy."

To her pastor she said, —

"I have always gone to God with troubles, and He helps me right off."

Christ-like to the last, she gave peace to those she was leaving. Florence must have been little aware what present and lasting encouragement was being imparted by her words and example. Helpless, and yet helping, through Christ who strengthened her. The very expression of that countenance, when the lips were silent, was a

precious witness to the truth of Christianity. None but Jesus can make a death-bed what hers was. So much of heaven was shed down in that chamber of death, that the wings of the dark angel were half absorbed in the great glory.

Late on Tuesday evening, the night previous to her death, the pastor and Mr. B—— called. It was understood that the child was too low to converse; and the most her friends expected was the privilege of looking once more upon her living face. At this time her senses had become so acute, that in several instances she recognized the approach of persons before they came within the sight or hearing of others. She was happy as ever to see her friends, and could not be satisfied to know of any coming to the house and going away without having been admitted to her room.

Softly Mr. B—— approached the bed where the child lay, supported by pillows, her usual position—bent close and spoke with her in whispers. The gentleman was one whom Florence loved dearly; he had visited her often during her illness; bringing her choice fruit; but more than this, made her very happy by always

having much to say about the blessed Savior. Standing at her bedside, doubtless for the last time, he desired to hear from her lips whether she felt all that willingness to depart and be with Christ which she had expressed to him two or three days before. Her replies were full of sweet assurance. She was leaning on Jesus' breast, in secure and perfect repose.

During these few moments her other friend, from beyond the threshold of the open door, stood gazing in silence, almost in awe, at that expiring life, like a candle which a breath of wind might extinguish. Florence knew of the presence of her pastor, and turned her eyes upon him with a loving invitation that drew him to her side. He stooped and kissed her; she returned the kiss, smiled, — and thus was exchanged the voiceless farewell.

The neighbor and friend who watched that night with the dying one, spoke to her at intervals of the state into which she was just about to enter, of the bright spirits of whose number she would be, of heavenly employments, and the higher service she would be capable of rendering her Lord. Meantime the

listener, unable to do more, manifested her enjoyment by pleased looks, a gentle inclination of the head, or occasional just audibly repeated "Yes — Yes."

CHAPTER XXX.

CLOSING SCENES.—TAKING LEAVE OF HER PARENTS.—FALLING ASLEEP IN JESUS.—THE LONE CHAMBER.—FLOWERS, FADING AND FADELESS.

ON Wednesday morning, the child not having slept for many hours, an anodyne was given in the hope that it would ease her pain and bring rest. This had a good effect; she lay very quiet most of the day, with closed eyes, like one in a sound, natural sleep. Occasionally she would look up and speak, and then appeared to have been at no time unconscious of what was passing around her. Especially if both her parents were absent from the room, Florence immediately became aware of the fact, and sent for one or the other. With either at her bedside she was satisfied. If, however, when one had occasion to leave while the other was absent, they but bent over the pale slumberer and said, "Daughter, I must go away a little while,"—though making no sign that she heard, she always remained quiet and undisturbed. It

was remarked that through all she retained her senses perfectly. Never did her lips move with words vague and strange, nor her eyes open with wild or dreamy looks that betokened a wandering mind. Upon arousing at length, she spoke thankfully of the comfortable day she had enjoyed, named — what no one besides herself had noted — the precise hour at which the medicine was taken, and told correctly the number of hours since.

A short time after, her distress returned so sharply that it was proposed to repeat the position. Florence heard, and only asked to see her father first. He was called. His little girl said a few words, clearly indicating by her manner that she felt it to be the last conversation with this beloved parent.

Her father sat at one side of the bed, her mother opposite. Florence became silent, but turned her eyes from one to the other constantly and regularly, with an indescribable expression. Was she gathering up the treasure of her parents' looks to take with her on the far journey?

Her father inquired whether she had said all. "Yes, all," was the reply.

"Is there nothing more, Florence, you wish to tell me?"

"Nothing, papa; I am ready for the medicine now."

It was administered, and again the child rested. Day by day friends had prayed in her hearing that God would spare her much more suffering. The child herself was only waiting, calm, and meek, and holy — waiting in patience so perfect it did not even admit of a haste to be gone, beyond the withering grasp of disease, the hopeless agony of death.

That night, though it was not thought to be her last, her parents felt unwilling to leave their darling, and watched alone. When at midnight the mother rose to take her turn in watching, she bowed her head in silent prayer that the sick one might not suffer extremely, and might have an easy death. She did not think the happy release so near.

An hour passed. The stillness was broken by a single stroke of the clock. Florence woke.

"I want my father," she said.

He had retired to the next room and lain down, but sprang to her side in a moment.

"Take me up, father."

He raised her in his arms. The little head drooped forward; the chin, as it rested on his hand, felt cold. The sweet face was lifted, and again, as soon as the strong hand was removed from the forehead, sank helplessly.

"Put me in bed again."

Her father was obliged to ask what she said. Florence repeated the words, and finding she still was not understood, spoke the third time quite distinctly. She was then replaced upon the pillows.

At the moment her mother was waiting at the other side of the bed with a cup of some weak nourishment, of which she hoped the sick one would be able to swallow a little, she having taken nothing for two days, except iced lemonade. But upon its being presented, Florence shook her head, drew back slightly, raised her eyes, which became fixed as if meeting the gaze of angels.

"She is going," said her father, and bent over and kissed her.

He felt the feeble motion of her lips as she attempted to give him back a kiss. Then she was gone indeed. Her mother clasped the lit-

tle form suddenly, with the feeling that she could not let her go just now, and called her by name, —

“Florence — Florence.”

No response. No look or smile. Where was Florence? Ah, how desolate all at once seemed that apartment. How they longed to say something more, and feel that their darling heard! How glad that they had said so much, and that the two she loved best had been near to receive her parting sigh. O, how could those parents have borne their loss but for the assurance that it was the child's gain! No more weakness and pain for Florence; she had soared upward on seraph's wings to the golden streets which she used to mention in her prayers, and already was mingling with the blest immortal throng who worship God and the Lamb forever and ever.

So gently, at last, the earthly bands were loosed. She died at the first hour of the morning, on the first day of the second month — Thursday, February 1, 1866. The winter dawn saw the little emaciated form lying cold and still where tender hands had shrouded it for the grave.

How changed everything within that dwelling! A dreariness everywhere, that made one feel like wringing the hands. How dragged the hours to those who had known no leisure from loving service to her who wanted nothing more! In the chamber of death no watchful eyes nor waiting hands; but whatever you looked upon said—ah! so plainly—that all was over. All that told of the battle with disease, lingering hope of life and comfort to the dying, gone. No blazing fire. From the table the cups and vials removed. The pillows and blankets of the bed carried out. Neighbors still came and went, entering with noiseless feet and mournful looks where the child lay; but the oft-repeated question of, How is Florence to-day? would be asked no more.

And yet amid the gloom which death brings—the death of the young—streamed such beams of light as come from heaven alone. The mourners had but to reflect what would be their emotions had she died without a hope in Christ, and their hearts were soothed, their natural sorrow mingled with thankfulness and praise.

A gift for Florence!

A large bouquet of rare and beautiful flowers was received in that hushed chamber. It came from Mr. O——, the gentleman who had enlivened her last visit with music, and who had not yet heard of the invalid's departure to the land of celestial harmony and flowers that never fade.

Florence loved flowers ; she had felt that it would be pleasant to have them about her even in death. Her desire was gratified. Buds and blossoms in rich profusion were woven for her into burial wreaths, sweet as spices with which in ancient Egypt the dead were embalmed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FUNERAL.

THE funeral was from the church, on Sunday, the day that Christ arose, who is the resurrection and the life, and who gives His disciples to share his victory over the grave. Before the pulpit, almost in the very spot, as the pastor remarked, where she had found her Savior fifteen months earlier, the body of Florence lay white-robed in its casket. There was scarcely the appearance of death upon the face so restful, and sweet, and glad. Beautiful and frail, her life was well symbolized by the pale rose-buds and japonicas in her hand, on her brow and bosom.

The Sabbath School was arranged in front; Florence's class, with its teacher, Miss B——, first. Her first teacher and her last, besides one who had been her teacher in the interval — three teachers — were present. Every seat in the church was filled, and still came others,

anxious to pay a last tribute of affection to the lovely Christian, early called.

When the Scripture she had chosen was read, what heart but believed that indeed Florence had gone to the Good Shepherd? Were not some present who would gladly have been as well assured of heaven for themselves, when they too should pass away, as they were for the one now departed? All day long Jesus stretches out his arms and cries, "Yet there is room."

The children sang her hymns in the following order — from the book called *The Golden Shower*: —

JUST AS I AM.

Just as I am — without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am — and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am — Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine — yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

JESUS LOVES ME.

Jesus loves me; this I know,
For the Bible tells me so:
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

Jesus loves me — He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin;
Let His little child come in.

Jesus loves me — loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From His shining throne on high
Comes to watch me where I lie.

Jesus loves me; He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
If I love Him, when I die
He will take me home on high.

LITTLE PILGRIMS.

To the heavenly land, to the heavenly land,
Where the saints and the seraphs stand;
We are on our way, we are on our way,
A united and happy band.

For the angels there will teach us
How to sing a sweeter song,
And no sorrow 'll ever reach us
In that happy throng.

Though we often tire, though we often tire,
Where the pathway is steep and straight,
We will still press on, we will still press on,
Till we pass through the Golden Gate.

CHORUS.

But we need not fear, but we need not fear,
For we've Jesus to be our Guide;
And with Him so near, and with Him so near,
Nought of evil can e'er betide.

CHORUS.

Will you go with us ? will you go with us ?
Come and share our bright home above,
Where the endless day, where the endless day
Is illumed by our Father's love.

CHORUS.

"It seems little like a funeral," people said
to one another.

"For years I have avoided looking at a
corpse," a gentleman observed, "death was such
a terror to me—but where is a lovelier sight
than this?"

The throng lingered about the dead; they
said they could not look enough.

At length the casket was closed, and to the
sound of the tolling bell a slow procession
moved along the streets to Dell Park Ceme-
tery. There repose the mortal remains, await-

ing the morning of the resurrection, when, at the call of the trump, she will come forth, clothed in new beauty and grace, to die no more.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRIBUTES OF FRIENDSHIP.—CONCLUSION.

MISS A. A. FELCH, who was Florence's teacher during her ninth year, and up to the time of her conversion, thus speaks of her pupil:—

"The memory of that child will ever be dear to me. She was as good a child as I ever knew, and a superior scholar for her age. In no instance did she give me any trouble; all her actions seemed dictated by high, conscientious principles."

From the same source is derived the following incident:—

One afternoon, when Mr. Earle was to preach, several little girls, Florence among them, asked to be dismissed to go to the meeting. The teacher inquired of them, one by one, what they wanted to go for. They had no definite answers to give, and appeared to have taken

but little thought about the object of going, till Florence came to be questioned.

"And why do *you* wish to go to the meeting?"

"Miss Felch," the child replied, "I think I love Jesus, and I expect to hear something at the meeting that will teach me my duties."

She had leave to go.

The teacher, a pious young lady, says she observed the change in Florence, and at once considered her a decided Christian.

After three terms Florence left this school, being promoted to a higher.

Miss A. A. Keith, her last teacher, in a communication addressed to the mother of the lamented child, gives her impressions of Florence as follows : —

"It gives me pleasure to know that you intend to make some record of that rare life whose day on earth was so brief, yet so complete, in all that tends to make life worthy and noble.

"It is not enough to say of Florence that she was born — and she died ; to all who knew her, her name will also suggest that other fact — that she lived.

"My knowledge of Florence's character was gained less through familiar and intimate intercourse with her, than by critical observation. For though always amiable and approachable, there was still a native reticence and sensitiveness about her that made one fearful of approaching too familiarly, lest they should wound where they only meant to establish confidence. So I contented myself with noticing and studying her quietly, and gained knowledge of her more through deeds than words, and more than either, I think, through her eye and expression.

"I felt for Florence from the first a kind of yearning sympathy, probably owing to the apparent weakness and delicacy of the physical organization. I watched her from day to day as one whose response at the roll-call might any morning be wanting.

"But as week after week passed away and found her in her accustomed seat, the feeling was lost in contemplating the unusual, and what then seemed to me almost painful maturity of her character.

"Always quiet and unobtrusive, there were yet a repose and self-reliance in every act and

word, which evinced that she was governed by a law within herself, rather than by any desire of favor and approbation. Duty seemed her polar guide, and every act was marked by the highest conscientiousness. Her sources of happiness, too, seemed not identical with those of her schoolmates. Though joining them heartily in their sports, there was about her an air that betokened that she lived less in the outer than in the inner and spiritual life. There was in her deep blue eye an expression of mingled earnestness, and peace, and faith, which often made me question if the soul were not absorbing the delicate physical life.

"And this earnestness was a distinguishing trait of her mental operations. Whatever was performed in study and recitation was done thoroughly and always with calm and ready thought. In judgment and power of analysis she gave rare promise. In several instances, I recollect, visitors singled her out in her class in grammar and reading as one who 'must have a fine mind.'

"Very distinctly I remember how in her Colburn's I could always turn to her when patience was losing ground, with confidence that she

would not disappoint me. Particularly was this the case in grammar — there, if I remember truly, she never failed me. Almost invariably, in explaining any point with which the class found difficulty, my eye instinctively sought hers, to read if I were making the matter clear. If that quick glance of intelligence met me, I knew I had succeeded.

"Whether as a matter of inclination or duty I know not, but in her class her attention never flagged.

"But by and by there came a request for dismissal during the sessions ; then occasionally of a half day a vacant chair ; after that an absence of several days ; and finally the intelligence given me with a regret, but still patiently and cheerfully, that she thought she must take a vacation for the rest of the term. As I listened to the hurried breathing, and watched the thin, wan hands removing the books from the little desk, I knew within myself that her vacation would be broken only by her promotion into a higher and more advanced school — into which I could not help thinking she was highly qualified to enter.

"One winter day, when the snows had come,

I heard that Florence had passed up; and I was glad, for I knew she lived now more happily and truly even than before."

CONCLUSION.

On one occasion, when Christ was upon earth, He set a child in the midst of the people, and taught them that whosoever would enter into the kingdom of heaven must become like this little one.

Florence was active in doing good while she lived; and though numbered with the early dead, may she not perchance be a helper with Christ still, through her influence and example? These survive. Her mates have not forgotten Florence, nor will forget, in any fleeting years to come. Recently one said, "Deacon E—— saw me laugh when Florence was praying for me once; the other day he reminded me of it; and O, *I couldn't stand that*. I do hope I too love the Savior now."

How must our little friend in heaven rejoice with the angels to see youthful feet beginning to walk the straight and narrow way! Who will undertake to fill her place, and help in the Master's vineyard?

If it is God's will, dear friend, may you live many years. But have you ever seriously considered how you would feel were you to be told, like little Florence, that you were on your death-bed, and soon to pass away? There is that which is more to be desired than long life; it is a renewed heart, to prepare you for usefulness on earth and happiness in heaven; then, living or dying, you will belong to the Lord.

A gentleman, more than once alluded to in these pages, speaks of Florence, from personal acquaintance, as a remarkable child — quite as remarkable as any, in other countries, perhaps, whose written life he suspected of being not all true. Yet in a land of so much gospel light as ours, surely it ought not to be a remarkable circumstance to devote one's self to God in very early years. Let it be remembered, that all which was loveliest and best in the character here described, was the result of religion, which is free to all.

By Florence's side sleep the twins, with another, an infant brother, who, since her departure, came like a white carrier-dove to the earthly home, and having nestled there a little time, spread its wings and returned to heaven.

Was its mission to bring tidings to angel Florence?

Raise no broken shaft to mark her resting-place : as one friend has expressed, her life, though brief, lacked not completeness. Well has another friend quoted, with reference to her, this line of the poet : —

“ That life is long which answers life’s great end ! ”

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